

MODULE 6 ACTIVITY

Finding our Flow

Experiencing a flow state can be difficult to achieve for many of us. We need an optimal environment, a task or hobby we enjoy primarily for the sake of the activity itself (that is, we care more about mastering it than performing for others), a minimum amount of skill in that task or hobby, and then a challenge within this task or hobby.

Yet, cognitive research has found that it is possible to simulate a similar experience in the short term. For some of us, we may need to practice how to cultivate our flow experiences using these short exercises.

This activity has two parts. Part 1 uses a brief game to demonstrate the conditions often needed to create flow. It may or may not work for you. The research into flow is clear that some people can experience mini flow states with certain activities, but not everyone. Still, this will illustrate the general approach. Part 2 will guide you in identifying your own flow process.

Part 1: Getting into Flow

Answer the following question using the scale below. On average, how skilled would you rate yourself at basic video games, with 1 being not skilled at all and 10 being very skilled?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Second, prepare a stopwatch using an app on your phone, computer, or internet browser. Be sure you are utilizing a stopwatch that will track time for you, not a timer or alarm.

Once you have your stopwatch queued, complete the following steps. **Please read through all of the steps before completing them.**

1. Start your stopwatch
2. Open this [link](#) and begin playing
3. Keep playing the game until you lose twice. **Immediately** guess how many minutes and seconds you have been playing.
4. Stop the stopwatch.

Once you have completed the four steps above, write your guessed time and actual time below.

Guessed time:

Actual time:

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Answer the following question using the rating scale below. How difficult was this particular game for you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Reflect on the experience of playing the game. Were you aware of time while playing? How focused did you feel? Were you feeling stressed, bored, relaxed, or having fun?

Compare your times and your two ratings. In past research, people who answer five or higher on the first question (i.e., skill at simple video games) and five or higher on the second question (i.e., difficulty of this particular video game) tend to underestimate their time. This is believed to be because the challenge of the game and the individual's skill level were appropriately matched to create some amount of flow experience. People who guess that more time passed than actually did are usually either bored, meaning the game was not challenging enough, or anxious, meaning they rated themselves lower on their video-gaming skills.

Not everyone experiences flow with this challenge. If you did not, that does not mean that you cannot experience flow ever; only that this task is not something that is meaningful or properly matched for you. If that is the case, the next part will be helpful for you.

Part 2: Planning for Flow

We can find flow in our lives if we practice and optimize our environment to create it. We recommend completing Part 2 as a journal exercise and regularly returning to the exercise if you find it helpful.

Choose an activity you love. It can be a fun and engaging activity or hobby, something with a lot of meaning and value to you (refer to Module 3 if you need to revisit the concept of values), or even your work.

An activity that I love to do is

Select a task. For example, if you play an instrument, the task can be learning a particular song or even practicing a particular segment of that song. It is important that the task is challenging! It must require you to use your skills. However, it cannot be too difficult. This can lead us to avoidance and stress.

A task in this activity that I can focus on is

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Engage in this task during your peak time. We all have different times during which our energy—physical, cognitive, and spiritual—peaks. Capitalize on that. If you are unsure of what that time is for you, experiment and keep track during this journal exercise.

My peak time for this activity and task is most likely

Clear away distractions. Turn off your phone. Connect with others, if others are involved. Practice mindfulness and let yourself be fully immersed in the moment.

Allow yourself to enjoy the moment. By being present-focused, you will naturally be less focused on your performance and meeting some perceived expectation. This creates space for you to have a positive experience.

Keep practicing. Embrace the love for what you do any time you engage in this activity, and when it isn't there, keep practicing. The act itself will bring about those feelings, and then you can reap the rewards of flow.

To find my flow, I will protect time around

So that I can do

